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THREE VISITS TO ALMORA**



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GERTRUDE EMERSON SEN

Wife of Mr. Boshi Sen, a disciple of Swami Sadananda
who was first initiated by Swami Vivekananda



SRI RAMAKRISHNA KUTIR
ALMORA

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S THREE VISITS TO ALMORA

From the *Letters* and *Life* of Swami Vivekananda, this account of his three visits to Almora—in 1890, 1897 and 1898—has been pieced together. Almora is a small Himalayan town (its present population is about 16,000), in the northern part of Uttar Pradesh. It is one of the jumping-off places for pilgrimages to the sacred shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinarayan, and to Mount Kailas, sacred to Shiva, in Tibet. The town itself, which lies at an altitude of just over 5000 ft. was founded in 1592 as the capital of the Chand rajas then ruling this region. Later on it was conquered by Nepal, but reconquered by the British in 1815. Many of the old houses of Almora have upper storeys finely carved in Nepalese tradition. The bazar, a single long street paved with stones, which runs along the rest of the ridge for about two miles with houses spilling down on both sides, has been cited as one of the best and most picturesque of the old hill bazars in India.

The surrounding hills and ridges are covered with deodars and pines. The annual rainfall is only some 45 to 50 inches, so that, compared with other hill stations of the western Himalayas such as Naini Tal, Ranikhet, Simla or Mussoorie, or Darjeeling at the other end of the Himalayan chain, Almora is "dry". In fact, it has an almost ideal climate, not too cold in winter, not too hot in summer, not wet in the rainy season. Apart from its healthful climate, there is the magnificent view to the north of some twenty great snow peaks, including Kamet, Nanda Devi and Trisul—all over twenty thousand feet high and stretching in a jagged line right up to the border of Tibet ninety miles away.

After the passing of Sri Ramakrishna in 1886, the young monks of the Baranagore Monastery soon scattered

in all directions, eager to practise Sadhana in some remote and lonely spot, or to go on pilgrimages to the holy places. One of them, Akhandananda, spent three years wandering in the Himalayas and Tibet, and he was the first of Ramakrishna's disciples to visit Almora, where he received hospitable treatment from Lala Badri, a leading citizen of the town. This gentleman was a true devotee, and afterwards showed extraordinary courtesy to all the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, many of whom in later years started from here on pilgrimages to the holy places, or remained in Almora for a time as his guests.

Like the others, Vivekananda, or Naren (Narendra) as he was then known, also longed to become a wanderer, to seek out some hidden retreat in the Himalayas where he could plunge into deep meditation. He left Calcutta in 1888, and got as far as Rishikesh, from where he intended to proceed to Badrinath, but his first disciple, Sadananda, who was then with him, and whom he had just initiated at Hathras, suddenly fell ill, and the plan had to be abandoned. Instead, they returned to Hathras, from where Vivekananda was called back to Baranagore by his brother monks. He remained at Baranagore practically the whole of the next year, confronted with many difficulties and responsibilities, but his mind was restless, and letters from Akhandananda, still wandering about in the Himalayas, made him long even more fervently to shake himself free and follow a life of uninterrupted meditation. There must have been a plan at one time during this year for him to join Akhandananda somewhere in the Himalayas and proceed to Tibet. An unpublished letter from Akhandananda (Gangadhar) to Badri Shah in Almora, written from Badrinath and dated June 19th, 1889, refers to the expected arrival in Almora of Vivekananda, mentioned simply as a "brother monk".

Badrinath

19th June, '89

My Dear Badri Shah,

A Guru-Bhai of mine is proceeding to Almora. Please receive him warmly and try to accommodate him in a comfortable place and help him in every way so that he may not feel the least trouble during his sojourn at Almora. He is one of my advanced Guru-Bhais, a highly educated gentleman leading a perfect ascetic life since ten or twelve years. He has sacrificed all his worldly prosperities for the sake of Almighty. Now he is in the stage of Paramahansa. He will start tomorrow. I am doing all right, most likely I will be starting for Lhasa in the coming month....

Your well wisher,
Bengali Gangadhar
or

Babajee, who returned from Tibet.

Vivekananda did not at this time go to Almora after all. Once more fate intervened. On the very day he was planning to leave Calcutta, the disciple Sadananda, who had taken months to recover from the illness he had contracted in Rishikesh, unexpectedly arrived to join the Baranagore Monastery. The departure had to be postponed, but the idea was never given up.

Early in 1890, Vivekananda started out again, stopping off in Ghazipur to see Pavhari Baba, a saint living in an underground cave surrounded by a high wall, from whom he hoped to learn something about Raja Yoga. From Ghazipur he wrote to Akhandananda, requesting him to come down to the plains immediately, so that the two might make preparation to depart for Nepal, Tibet and possibly China. But the illness of a brother monk took him to Banaras, and there he had news of the death of Balaram Bose, the great householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, and returned to Calcutta.

Finally, on July 6th, he wrote to two of his brothers already in Almora, Saradananda and Vaikunthanath : "I intend shortly, as soon as I can get a portion of my fare, to go up to Almora, and then to some place in Garhwal on the Ganges where I can settle down for a long meditation. Gangadhar is accompanying me . . . This time I shall not go to Pavhari Baba or any other saint—they divert one from one's highest purpose. Straight up!" Before leaving, he told his Gurubhais, "I shall not return until I acquire such realisation that my very touch will transform a man."

Today a fine motor road brings the traveller from Kathgodam, the railway terminus at the foot of the hills, to Almora within a few hours. In 1890, travellers had to come by horseback, palanquin or on foot, along a rough bridle-path. Vivekananda, accompanied by Akhandananda, set out carrying only staff and Kamandalu. From Kathgodam they walked to Naini Tal and thence on to Almora, begging their food along the way. On the third day, they reached a place called Kakrighat, on the Kosi River. "What a delightful spot for meditation!" Vivekananda remarked, sitting down under a great peepul tree. Almost immediately his body became stiff and motionless, as if all the life had gone out of it, and for a long time he remained in that state. On returning to normal consciousness, he exclaimed, "Oh Gangadhar, I have just passed through one of the greatest moments of my life. I have found the oneness between the macrocosm and the microcosm. I have seen the whole universe within an atom!" Overwhelmed by this experience, he could think and talk of nothing else as they continued on their way to Almora.

When they were climbing the last steep slope leading to the town, having had nothing to eat all day, Vivekananda suddenly sank down, almost fainting in sheer exhaustion, opposite a small Muslim graveyard. Akhandananda went

off in search of water. Meanwhile, the fakir in charge of the cemetery, seeing his plight, offered Vivekananda a cucumber. Too tired even to lift his hand, Vivekananda asked the man to put it in his mouth. When the latter held back, saying that he was a Mussalman, Vivekananda characteristically replied, "What does that matter? Are we not all brothers!"

This story was to have an unexpected sequel. Seven years later, on his next visit to Almora in 1897, no longer as an unknown, starving Sannyasin but as the world-famous Swami Vivekananda, he was met on the way and conducted in a big procession to the town. Suddenly he caught sight of that same Muslim fakir in the crowd and stopped to thank him publicly for his former service. "The man really saved my life. Never had I felt so exhausted," Vivekananda explained.

It was in late August or September, 1890 that Vivekananda first arrived in Almora. There he and Akhandananda joined the two monks already staying as guests of Badri Shah. While he was staying at the house of Badri Shah, a curious incident happened. A man became "possessed", and Badri Shah was asked to come and see him. Vivekananda went along, and the crowd, seeing his ochre cloth, begged him to cure the sick man. "Who am I, my brothers? I am only a Sannyasin. The Lord will take care of him." Yet since he was pressed to do so, he laid his hand on the head of the sick man tossing in a frenzy and frothing at the mouth. Almost instantly he grew quiet and in a short time became quite normal again.

After remaining a few days with his kind host, Vivekananda felt an irresistible urge to be alone, to plunge into that deep meditation for which his soul thirsted. He walked to a solitary cave overhanging a small mountain village. The exact location of this cave has never been determined.

There are several answering to its general description around Almora, but very possibly it was a large well known cave on Kasar Devi, a forested spur five miles to the north-east of Almora town. This cave now has a built-up entrance and is now and then used by stray Sadhus as a sort of hermitage. In the cave Vivekananda practised an intense Sadhana, determined to reach that ultimate realisation which he held to be the goal of his life.

In the first edition of *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western disciples*, a remarkable account of his experience in the cave is given, which is strangely omitted from later editions.

"Here in that cave, overhanging a mountain-village," the account reads, "he practised austerities day and night. He determined to find Truth. And there in the silence, with not even a single soul to disturb his meditation, he had experience after experience in the way of illumination, until his face shone with a celestial fire. And then, at the very climax of all his spiritual exercises, instead of abiding in the ultimate state of personal bliss which he expected to do, he felt the impetus to work, and this seemed to force him out, as it were, from his Sadhana."

This was indeed a strange time for him. The monk Akhandananda has spoken of it thus : "It seemed as if every time the Swami desired to retire into the life of silence and pure monasticism, he was compelled to give it up by the pressure of circumstances. He had a Mission to fulfil, and the very essence of his nature would force him into the realisation of this line of work." He himself, referring to his strange experience in the cave, said later, "Nothing in my whole life ever so filled me with the sense of work to be done. It was as if I were thrown out from that life of solitude, to wander to and fro in the plains below." And so

he came back again to his brother disciples and his host, in Almora. There he found a telegram awaiting him, announcing the suicide of his widowed sister, and a letter soon followed with all the harrowing details. He suffered a great shock, and then and there was rudely awakened to some of the special problems confronting Hindu women, particularly widows, and he made up his mind to fight their cause in the face of orthodox tradition.

The four monks now decided to continue on their way to Badrinath. They had travelled on foot some 120 miles when the illness of one, and then of another, compelled them to abandon the idea of their pilgrimage. It was already intensely cold, with winter approaching. They made their way down to Rishikesh, beloved of *Sadhus*, where the Ganga enters the plains of India. A little later, at Meerut, Vivekananda suddenly decided to separate from his brothers. He must go alone, seeking to understand that India he now knew, he had been born to serve. For the next two and a half years he wandered on, now and then by chance encountering some Gurubhai at an out of the way place, or passing one at a railway station. Then he completely disappeared. Somehow in Madras he had heard of a forthcoming Parliament of Religions to be held at Chicago in 1893 and young men of Madras raised the money to pay for his passage to the United States. Only the Holy Mother was actually told of his new plan, and she gave him her blessings. When next heard of, he had become the famous Swami Vivekananda who had taken the Parliament of Religions by storm.

Vivekananda returned from America and Europe in January, 1897. With him came J. J. Goodwin, an English disciple and an expert court stenographer, whom he had first met in New York, and an English couple, Captain and Mrs. Sevier, who had become his warm followers in London and were coming to India to found an Advaita Ashrama in

the Himalayas—a dream Vivekananda had first spoken about to them in Switzerland. The strenuous work of lecturing and holding classes abroad, undertaken with the combined hope of raising funds for starving India and spreading the message of Vedanta in the West, had its effect on his health. The tumultuous welcome he received on his home-coming after landing in Ceylon, and in Calcutta—the vast crowds, the processions, the public addresses, the innumerable interviews—added to his exhaustion. He wanted to fly to Almora for rest, but in Bengal he felt that two major tasks awaited him. The first was to organize the Ramakrishna Mission, for service to the poor, the down-trodden and the needy among his countrymen, and the second was to plan voluntary relief work by the monks in the famine then sweeping several districts of Bengal. His fiery command to his brother monks and disciples was to forget their own salvation for the sake of others. Finally, in early May, 1897, he left Calcutta, on the doctor's insistence, for Almora. Some of his Gurubhais and disciples also went with him. Goodwin and another English follower Miss Muller, had already preceded him.

This time, Goodwin and other admirers went all the way down to Kathgodam to receive him. As the party was approaching the town by the old bridle-path, they were met on the way by a large crowd, and Vivekananda was made to mount a gaily decorated horse. The triumphant procession proceeded to the bazar, where three thousand people were waiting to give him a public welcome. All along the way, women gathered on the roof-tops showered him with flowers and auspicious rice. Decorative awnings were strung across the street in front of Badri Shah's house to form a pandal, and all the houses were lighted up as if for a festival.

Two addresses in English and one in Sanskrit were read out, and to these, in view of the lateness of the hour, Viveka-



nanda made a brief but moving reply in English. He referred to the Himalayas as the land of their forefather's dreams, "the holy land where every ardent soul in India wants to come at the end of his life, to close the last chapter of his mortal career here." And he went on : "this is the land which since my very boyhood I have been dreaming of... I have attempted again and again to live here forever. and although the time was not ripe, and I had work to do and was whirled away outside of this holy place... yet I sincerely pray and hope, and almost believe, my last days will be here, of all places on earth... These Himalayas stand for renunciation, and as our forefathers used to be attracted to it in the latter days of their life, so strong souls from all quarters of this earth, in time to come, will be attracted to this father of mountains, when all this fight between sects, and all these differences in dogmas, will not be remembered any more and quarrels between your religion and my religion will have vanished altogether, when mankind will understand that there is but one eternal religion, and that is the perception of the Divine within, and the rest is mere froth. Such ardent souls will come here, knowing that the world is but vanity of vanities, knowing that everything is useless except the worship of the Lord and the Lord alone... These mountains are associated with the best memories of our race. Here, therefore, must be one of those centres, not merely of activity, but more of calmness, of meditation, and of peace, and I hope some day to realize it".

This time Vivekananda remained in Almora two and half months, again as the guest of his old friend Badri Shah. Yet sometimes he felt that even Almora was not far enough away, not quiet enough. Twice he retreated to Dewaldhar, an estate some twenty miles to north. There he rode horseback and enjoyed the delightful climate and magnificent scenery, especially the sunrise over the mighty snow peaks.

Gradually his health improved, and he wrote to his doctor in Calcutta that he had not felt so well since he was a boy. Miss Muller, who undertook to feed him "three square meals a day, European-style", no doubt helped to hasten his recovery. But he would not give himself a longer rest than was absolutely necessary. By the end of July, he was ready to leave Almora.

Before he left, the English residents of the station invited him to give a lecture at the English Club. He chose for his subject the different approaches of West and East in the search for a solution of the vital questions confronting the soul—the Western method, which seeks for a solution in the outside world, the Eastern method, finding no answer in nature turns its enquiry within. He also gave two lectures at the Almora Inter. College. Here, in response to the public request, he attempted his first talk in Hindi, his subject being "Vedic Teaching in Theory and Practice".

The third visit of Vivekananda to Almora took place the following year. By this time more of his foreign disciples had followed him to India. Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) arrived at Calcutta from England in January, 1898, and Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod from America, in February. Captain and Mrs. Sevier, as the heat of the plains increased, left for Almora where they rented a large house, then known as "Thompson House" and belonging to Badri Shah, at the western end of the ridge. They were still concerned with the question of finding a suitable location for the proposed Advaita Ashrama. Vivekananda was urged to come and stay with them as their guest. Fearing that his newly arrived Westerners would fall ill during the burning heat of the advancing summer, Vivekananda took them all with him, and left Calcutta for Almora on May 11th, 1898. The party included Nivedita.

Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss. MacLeod, Mrs. Patterson, the wife of the American Consul-General in Calcutta, who had met and befriended Vivekananda in the early days in America, two of his brother monks, Niranjanananda and Turiyananda, and two of his personal disciples, Sadananda and Swarupananda. Vivekananda and the monks became the guests of Captain and Mrs. Sevier at "Thompson House", while the Western friends and Nivedita, an initiated disciple, lived at "Oakley House".

The weeks that followed must have been almost a repetition of the wonderful days at Thousand Island Park, on the St. Lawrence, back in the summer of 1895, when there gathered around him an ardent little group of seekers, one of whom, afterwards known as Sister Christine, became a lifelong disciple and devoted the rest of her life to serving India. Vivekananda set himself at the task of training these Western followers, of breaking down their instinctive prejudices, of explaining strange Indian customs, myths, symbols and history. Every morning, after an early walk with the monks, he went on to "Oakley House" for breakfast, and spent several hours in vivid talks ranging over an infinite variety of subjects. Sister Nivedita has left an inspiring account of these talks in her little book entitled *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda*. There were also discussions and interviews with many who came to see him. One day Mrs. Annie Besant, then leader of the Theosophical Movement in India, was entertained at tea at "Thompson House". On another occasion a saintly Bengali patriot, Aswini Dutta, who had met Vivekananda years ago as "Narendra", saw him out riding horseback and followed him to his door. In the ensuing conversation, Vivekananda made clear his own idea of how India's salvation was to be attained. "Do you think merely passing a few resolutions will bring freedom?" he thundered. "I

have no faith in that. The masses must be awakened first. Let them have full meals, and they will work out their own salvation".

Now and then, he was again overwhelmed by the old mood to be utterly alone. On one such occasion he departed for Shya Devi, a forested peak some miles west of Almora. Here he remained for three days. When he returned—he had at least made one worthwhile discovery. He was still, he claimed, "the old-time Sannyasin, able to go barefoot and endure heat or cold and scanty fare, unspoilt by the West." Back in Almora, however, a new shock awaited him. A wire brought news of the death of the faithful Goodwin at Ootacamund, in South India. When the telegram announcing Goodwin's death was handed to him, he stood in front of "Thompson House", according to Miss MacLeod, gazing off to the distant snow peaks in absolute silence for a long time. Then he remarked very quietly, "The days of my public utterance are over". That night he composed a poem, "Requiescat in Pace", which he sent to Goodwin's mother, and in feeling words he paid tribute to his friend and disciple, "The debt of gratitude I owe him can never be repaid, and those who think they have been helped by any thought of mine ought to know that almost every word of it was published through the untiring and most unselfish exertions of Mr. Goodwin."

Once more the time had come to move and Vivekananda decided to proceed to Kashmir with the Western disciples. Before they left Almora—Vivekananda for the last time—on June 11th, 1898, an important step was taken. The editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, or "Awakened India", the English journal originally started in Madras, had suddenly died, and it was decided to restart the journal in Almora. The young disciple Swami Swarupananda became its new

editor, and Captain Sevier offered to pay all the expenses for bringing up a hand-press, paper, etc., and to act as manager. Until the publication centre was finally removed in March, 1899, to Mayavati, fifty-five miles from Almora—the site ultimately selected by the Seviers—and Swarupananda was made need of the Advaita Ashram in the Himalayas—the journal continued to be brought out from Almora.

The three visits of Swami Vivekananda, and the many more from monks of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in years to follow have made Almora a place of special significance for the followers of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, both of East and West. On the steep western end of the ridge on which the town itself is built, perches the Ashram (familiarily known as the Ramakrishna Kutir) founded by Swami Turiyananda in 1916. It has grown to comprise several buildings, and anything from five monks in winter to twenty or more in the hot weather, may be found in residence here. The Ashram is a living symbol of the place of retreat and meditation that Vivekananda loved. Not far off is also the Vivekananda Laboratory organized to carry on fundamental research work in Plant, Physiology and Agriculture, by my husband Boshi Sen, a disciple of Vivekananda's first disciple Sadananda. In between the two, still stands "Thompson House", now the property of another owner and renamed "The Avocado", almost exactly as the old house stood when Vivekananda lived there sixty-five years ago.

1963.

GERTRUDE EMERSON SEN

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA MEMORIAL REST-HALL

The Swami Vivekananda Memorial Rest-Hall at Almora was declared open on July 4th, 1971. Built through donations of friends and well-wishers of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission both in India and abroad, it commemorates the spot where Vivekananda fell down exhausted close to the old Muslim graveyard on the outskirts of the town, on his first visit to Almora in 1890, having walked from Kathgodam via Naini Tal with a brother disciple. Seeing his plight, the Muslim fakir in charge of the graveyard offered him all he had by way of refreshment—a cucumber. Too tired even to take it from his hand, Vivekananda asked him to put it in his mouth! “But I am a Muslim”, the man replied, astonished that the unknown Sannyasin was ready to accept such a violation of Hindu customs. “Are we not brothers?” was Vivekananda’s answer. Later, he told people how his Muslim brother at Almora had once saved his life.

A new motor road now passes just above the site of the Rest-Hall, which offers temporary shelter to all passers by from heat, rain or cold. A water tap supplies the only drinking water available for a distance of two or three miles on this part of the road, and in the open space on the north side of the Hall, facing the snow ranges is a stone table with seats for the convenience of visitors. The Hall itself is open on all sides, though it is surrounded by a low wall along the entire length, of which brightly painted flower boxes filled with perennial or seasonal flowers always in bloom offer a refreshing welcome to those who care to stop here and rest. A dozen young trees have been planted on the bare slope between the road and the Hall, in the expectation that within a few years they will provide a feast of rainbow colour in beautiful contrast with the weather-

beaten stone tombstones scattered on the lower slopes. At the four corners of the little gleaming white pavilion, rose-vines and a wistaria-vine are slowly climbing their way upward toward the flat roof.

A fine coloured reproduction of an idealistic portrait of Vivekananda by the American artist Earl Brewster hangs against the cement grille-work below the roof, facing the entrance. Swamiji is portrayed seated in meditation against a background of Lake Manasarowar and the snow-capped Mount Kailas, home of Shiva in the Himalayas. This is a very appropriate setting, since the Swami Vivekananda Memorial Rest-Hall of Almora is perhaps the northernmost memorial so far erected to him in India. The Hall itself is quite bare except for three benches, but inset in the pillars, protected by plate-glass, are ten sayings of Vivekananda, inscribed by hand in English, Hindi and Urdu, and expressing his noble ideals of Service, Work, Religion, Ideals, Unity, Faith, Freedom, Character, Truth and offering Salutation to all the great prophets past, present and yet to come, "of whatever race, clime or creed !"

Thus this Memorial Hall has been conceived not only as a place of rest for all travellers passing by, but of deeper inspiration and quiet meditation.

SERVICE

My life's allegiance is to this my motherland, and if I had a thousand lives, every moment of the whole series would be consecrated to your service, my countrymen, my friends.

WORK

Competition rouses envy, and it kills the kindliness of the heart. To the grumbler, all duties are distasteful; nothing will ever satisfy him, and his whole life is doomed to prove a failure. Let us work on, doing as we go whatever happens to be our duty, and being ever ready to put our shoulders to the wheel.

RELIGION

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.

IDEALS

We must show the spirituality of the Hindus, the mercifulness of the Buddhists, the activity of the Christians, the brotherhood of the Mohammedans, by our practical lives.

UNITY

I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made of false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.

FAITH

Have faith in yourselves. Do not look up to the rich and great men who have money. The poor did all the great and gigantic work of the world. Be steady, and above all be pure and sincere to the backbone.

FREEDOM

One may gain political and social independence, but if he is a slave to his passions and desires, he cannot feel the pure joy of real freedom.

CHARACTER

What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose love is one burning love—selfless. That love will make every word tell like a thunderbolt. Awake, great souls! The world is burning in misery. Can you sleep?

TRUTH

All truth is eternal. Truth is nobody's property; no race, no individual, can lay any exclusive claim to it. Truth is the nature of all souls.

SALUTATION

Our salutations go to all the past prophets whose teachings and lives we have inherited, whatever might have been their race, clime or creed! Our salutations go to all those God-like men and women who are working to help humanity, whatever be their birth, colour or race! Our salutations to those who are coming in the future—living Gods—to work unselfishly for our descendants.

TEACHINGS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

By doing well the duty which is nearest to us, the duty which is in our hands now, we make ourselves stronger ; and improving our strength in this manner step by step, we may even reach a state in which it shall be our privilege to do the most coveted and honoured duties in life and in society: Every duty is holy, and devotion to duty is the highest form of the worship of God.

Duty is seldom sweet. It is only when love greases its wheels that it runs smoothly : it is a continuous friction otherwise. How else could parents do their duties to their children, husbands to their wives and vice versa ? Do we not meet with cases of friction every day in our lives ? Duty is sweet only through love.

Faith, faith, faith in ourselves, faith, faith in God—this is the secret of greatness. If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which the foreigner have now and again introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith and be strong ; that is what we need.



I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.

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May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, the special object of my worship.

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Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. Is it not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping your fellowman?

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What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel—gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the universe and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion—even if it meant going to the bottom of the ocean and meeting Death face to face.

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So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA